

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT LISBON 3045 ACTION SECSTATE INFO LONDON MADRID
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QUOTE

S E C R E T LISBON 3045

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TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IF AZORES REVOLT

REF: PONTA DELGADA 162 (PASEP)

SUMMARY: THIS CABLE DESCRIBES THE MILITARY CAPABILITY OF
VARIOUS FORCES IN THE AZORES AND THE REACTION CAPABILITY
OF GOP MAINLAND FORCES TO A POSSIBLE UPRISING. END SUMMARY.

1. BATTALION 17 LOCATED AT ANGRA DO HEROISMO ON TERCEIRA
ISLAND (SITE OF U.S. BASE) HAS MINIMAL MILITARY CAPABILITY
AND IS TOTALLY INCAPABLE OF SUSTAINING OPERATIONS WHICH
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REQUIRE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT. THE BATTALION CONSISTS OF
ABOUT 350 TROOPS, APPROXIMATELY 200 OF WHOM ARE AZOREAN
RAW RECRUITS, MANY OF WHOM GO HOME ON THE WEEKEND. THE
BATTALION IS GARRISONED IN A 15TH CENTURY FORT. THERE IS

ONE NARROW ROAD WHICH LEADS TO THE FORT'S TWO ENTRANCES, BOTH OF WHICH LEAD THRU NARROW TUNNELS. THERE ARE ONLY TWO MAIN ROADS ON TERCEIRA WHICH LEAD FROM THE FORT TO AIR BASE NO. 4. THEY COULD BE EASILY INTERDICTED IN NUMEROUS PLACES. THE TROOPS ARE ILL-EQUIPPED, POORLY TRAINED, AND POORLY MOTIVATED. THE LARGEST CONFIRMED WEAPON IN THEIR INVENTORY IS THE 7.62 SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLE. THESE WEAPONS ARE STOWED IN AN ARMORY LOCATED WITHIN THE GARRISON. THE MAJOR AMMO STOWAGE AREA IS LOCATED UP THE MOUNTAIN APPROXIMATELY 1/2 MILE FROM THE FORT. THE BATTALION HAS VERY LIMITED CAPABILITIES FOR TRANSPORTING TROOPS, CONSISTING OF AN ESTIMATED 6 TRUCKS AND 6 JEEPS. THEY HAVE NO ARMORED VEHICLES AND POSSESS NO KNOWN ARTILLERY PIECES. ALTHOUGH UNCONFIRMED AND BASED STRICTLY ON INFORMAL CONVERSATION, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE BATTALION HAS LIGHT AND PERHAPS HEAVY CALIBER MACHINE GUNS IN ADDITION TO LIGHT MORTARS.

2. 17TH INF CO IS MAJOR ALCINO DE JESUS RAIANO. U.S. MILITARY OFFICER WHO KNOWS SUBJECT CONSIDERS HIM AFM SUPPORTER. HE IS MARRIED TO AZOREAN WHOSE FATHER IS WEALTHY CONTRACTOR IN AZORES.

3. BATTALION 18 LOCATED NEAR PONTA DELGADA, SAO MIGUEL ISLAND IS ROUGHLY COMPARABLE IN PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT TO BATTALION 17. THE TROOPS ARE HOUSED IN AN OLD BARRACKS LOCATED 2.1 MILES N/W OF PONTA DELGADA. NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US ON 18TH INF BTN CMDR LTCOL RENATO GIL BOTELHO DE MIRANDA. LAST OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT WAS IN GUINE BISSAU IN 1973.

4. THE MILITARY COMMAND OF THE AZORES: THE SEAT OF THE MILITARY GOVERNOR, IS LOCATED IN FORT SAO BRAS AT PONTA DELGADA. THE FACILITY IS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THE PORT AND CONTROLS THE ENTRANCE TO THE DOCKING FACILITIES. IN ADDITION TO STAFF OFFICERS A CONTINGENT OF APPROXIMATELY 25 TROOPS ARE ASSIGNED. MILITARY GOVERNOR OF AZORES, GENERAL PINTO MAGALHAES, IS WELL KNOWN TO DAO AS A MODERATE.

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REPORTEDLY LEFT ANGOLA OF HIS OWN VOLITION WHEN HE WAS MILITARY COMMANDER OF 3RD REGION DURING ROSA COUTINHO'S TENURE AS HIGH COMMISSIONER. ALLEGEDLY, HE OPPOSED COUTINHO'S SUPPORT OF COMMUNIST ORIENTED MPLA. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HE WOULD BECOME INVOLVED IN FLY BY NIGHT SCHEME.

5. NAVAL FORCES: THE ONLY NAVAL FORCES IN THE ARCHIPELAGO ARE LOCATED AT PONTA DELGADA AND CONSIST OF 2 PATROL CRAFT. CHARACTERISTICS:
CLASS: "MAIO"
BUILT BY PORTUGUESE IN 1957 UNDER U.S. OFF-SHORE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM.

DISPLACEMENT: 400 TONS, LENGTH 170 FEET.

GUNS: (2) 40MM AA, (2) 20MM AA, AND ASW WEAPONS.

PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT: 62 (EACH SHIP)

CRUISE SPEED: 19KTS

6. AIR BASE NO. 4, THE SITE OF U.S. BASE ON TERCEIRA, HAS NO COMBAT AIRCRAFT. THERE ARE ONLY 2 PERMANENTLY STATIONED A/C IN THE ENTIRE ARCHIPELAGO AND THESE ARE VINTAGE C-47S. THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 700 REGULAR AIR FORCE PERSONNEL STATIONED AT AB NO. 4 CHARGED WITH THE TRAINING OF TROOPS IN WEATHER, OPERATIONS, RAPCON PROCEDURES AND SECURITY POLICE FUNCTIONS. THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON IS MADE UP OF APPROXIMATELY 100 PERSONNEL WHO ARE ILL-EQUIPPED, POORLY TRAINED, AND POORLY MOTIVATED. THE ONLY KNOWN WEAPONS THEY POSSESS ARE 9MM SIDE ARMS AND 9MM SUBMACHINE GUNS. IT HAS BEEN RUMORED BUT NEVER CONFIRMED THAT THE AIR FORCE ALSO POSSESSES A 20MM AUTOMATIC WEAPON LOCATED SOMEWHERE ON THE AB NO. 4 GARRISON COMPOUND.

7. BRIGADIER MARIO WILTON PERREIRA, CO OF AZOREAN AIR ZONE COULD BE DESCRIBED AS A "FRIGHTENED MODERATE." HE SERVED AS CDR OF AIR BASE 4 APRIL 69-70. HE HAS CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH COMFORAZ. WHILE HE IS PROBABLY UNHAPPY ABOUT DRIFT ON MAINLAND HE DOES NOT STRIKE US AS TYPE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN UPRISING, ALTHOUGH HE MIGHT NOT BE OVERLY VIGOROUS IN OPPOSING ONE.

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8. INDEPENDENT GARRISON AT FAIAL ISLAND HAS 200 MEN, WITH LIGHT ARMS.

9. CAPABILITY OF PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT TO REINFORCE OR RETAKE ISLANDS SHOULD THEY BE TAKEN BY THE INSURGENTS:

(A) BY AIR: LAJES AB ON TERCEIRA AND SANTA MARIA AIRPORT AT SANTA MARIA WILL TAKE AIRCRAFT UP TO TYPE 747. THE SANTANA AIRPORT IN SAN MIGUEL WILL ACCEPT UP TO 727. PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE COULD CONCEIVABLY LAUNCH TWO 707S, EIGHT DC-6S AND NINE NORD ATLAS AIRCRAFT FOR A TOTAL TROOP LIFT OF APPROXIMATELY 920 TO RESPOND WITHIN 12 HOURS. IN ADDITION PAF COULD BE EXPECTED TO COMMANDEER AVAILABLE TAP AIRLINE 727, 747, AND 707 AIRCRAFT. THERE ARE 2200 PARATROOPERS LOCATED AT TANCOS AIR BASE IN PORTUGAL OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY 1400 COULD BE CONSIDERED COMBAT EFFECTIVE IN THE FIRST 72 HOURS.

AIRFIELDS - AZORES:

- (1) LAJES/TERCEIRA
RUNWAY: 10856 X 300 FEET
- (2) SANTA MARIA
RUNWAY: 10000 X 197
- (3) PONTA DELGADA

RUNWAY: 5905 X 200

(B) BY SEA: PORTUGUESE NAVY'S CAPABILITY TO SUPPORT
AN OPPOSED MILITARY OPERATION IN THE AZORES IS SEVERELY
LIMITED BY THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- (1) LACK OF AN AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT CAPABILITY;
- (2) LACK OF INTEGRAL LIFT CAPABILITY.

10. PORTUGUESE ARMY AND MARINES COULD BE TRANSPORTED TO
THE AZORES BY NAVY CHARTERED OR COMMANDEERED SHIPS.
HOWEVER

OFF-LOADING OF TROOPS AND NECESSARY SUPPORT
EQUIPMENT WOULD REQUIRE CONTROL OF HARBOR FACILITIES
AT PONTA DELGADA AND PRAIA DE VITORIA BY A FORCE LOYAL
TO THE CONTINENTAL GOVERNMENT. DEBARKATION OF TROOPS
FROM ANCHORAGE WOULD BE DEPENDENT UPON AVAILABILITY
(UNDER LOYALIST CONTROL) OF BARGES, LIGHTERS, TUGS,
AND/OR NAVAL CRAFT.

11. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE CAPABILITY OF AN AZORES SEPARATIST
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MOVEMENT TO HOLD THE MAIN ISLANDS FOR AT LEAST A SHORT PERIOD
IS THAT IT COULD BE DONE. IT WOULD BE ENORMOUSLY DIFFICULT
FOR GOP TO MOUNT AN AMPHIBIOUS OR AIRBORNE ASSAULT AGAINST A
DETERMINED DEFENSE BY THE ISLANDERS JOINED BY THE MILITARY
GARRISONS ON THE ISLANDS. WITHOUT THE MILITARY GARRISONS,
HOWEVER, THE SEPARATISTS WOULD HAVE VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE.
WE WOULD NOTE IN REGARD TO REFTEL THAT IT IS CLEARLY IN THE
INTERESTS OF THE FLA LEADERS TO EXAGGERATE TO U.S. THE DEGREE
OF SUPPORT THEY CAN COUNT ON FROM THE ISLAND GARRISONS.
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